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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CAMPAIGN TO OUST PRESIDENT CHEN SHUI-BIAN

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused their coverage September 20 on the ongoing and follow-on movements to former DPP Chairman Shih Ming-teh's campaign to oust President Chen Shui-bian; on the violent clashes that erupted between the pro-Chen and anti-Chen protesters in Tainan Tuesday; and on an attempted military coup in Thailand Tuesday. The pro-status quo "China Times" ran a front-page banner headline that read "To Communicate with Bian over Exit Mechanism, Lee Teng-hui Will Invite Lien, Soong, and Wang to Help Resolve Political Chaos." The pro-unification "United Daily News" also ran a banner headline on page six that said: "Watching Political Developments, Lee Teng-hui Does Not Rule out Possibility of Ousting Bian." The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, by contrast, carried a banner headline on page four that read "Shih Ming-teh Calls for Negotiation, [But] Lee Teng-hui Remains Unmoved."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "China Times" editorial calls for tolerance in dealing with the clashes between the people who oppose President Chen and those who support him. A "United Daily News" editorial urged the Legislative Yuan to consider launching a presidential recall motion for the second time. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" said Taiwan needs a cease-fire and an end to political confrontations between the ruling and opposition parties. End summary.

A) "Be Tolerant and Sympathetic toward the Various Anxieties of the Red-Shirted and Pro-Green Groups"

The pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (9/20):

"The confrontation between the red-shirted people who want to oust Bian and the Green pro-Chen supporters seems to be spreading to every part of the island. Regardless of the question of whether such clashes will escalate, no one is happy to see the confrontation being directed to become battles among the Taiwan people. ... For Taiwan, the most important thing right now is not to find an enemy inside the island, and the most urgent issue is not about its sovereignty. Instead, the top priority is to rebuild the values system that has been trampled on and torn down, to reclaim the significance of right and wrong, and to establish a sound foundation for the operation of Taiwan's democracy. It is fortunate that the 'Oust Bian' movement this time has risen beyond the traditional labels that distinguish different political parties, Blue and Green, and unification and independence. The enthusiastic participation of women and youth in the campaign also manifested a new, pure, and genuinely honest power, which is derived from love, not from fear or grief. Taiwan has found its future in this power; and it's up to the Blue and the Green camps each to decide if they also view it the same way."

B) "Legislative Yuan May Consider Launching Recall Motion for the Second Time"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (9/20):

"On the night of September 15, people who want to oust Bian flooded the streets of Taipei City like red lava. In the face of such a situation, Chen Shui-bian undoubtedly not only feels uneasy at the Presidential Office but is also unable to manage the country effectively. Even when he left the capital and went to other cities, he still faced protests of those who want him to step down; he has lost all his dignity. Should this situation continue, national affairs will be left unattended, and Taiwan will cease to function and be stuck in stagnation for the next 20 months. Now is the time for the Legislative Yuan to consider launching a presidential recall motion for the second time! The timing for launching such a motion should be at the moment when the investigation report on the special account for affairs of state case is made public. ...

"The purpose of launching a second recall motion is to use key issues, such as the closing of the case on the special account for affairs of state, to test again the attitudes of the DPP and the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU). The TSU, which abstained from voting for the first recall motion, will have to reconsider its position now. The DPP will also have to cope seriously with the second recall motion in the face of [the investigation report] which may possibly say 'Wu Shu-chen is indicted on the charges, while Chen's involvement in the case is sealed for the time being and will be charged after he leaves office.' ..."

C) "Time for Dialogue, Not Confrontation"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] noted in an editorial (9/20):

"... Taiwan needs a cease-fire and an end of political confrontation between the governing ruling and opposition political forces and for all sides to step back from short-term partisan interests or personal resentments to engage in dialogue on Taiwan's needs in a broader perspective. The recent campaign, both by the 'Depose Chen' campaign and the 'Formosa Sunshine' rally, have demonstrated a growing public eagerness for cleaner government, more political stability, continued economic improvement, efficient and responsive governance and rule of law through democratic political institutions and an independent judiciary. Taiwan's democracy may not be perfect, but it has gone through bottom-up and grassroots evolution. Any resource to extremist measures that contravene the principle of democratic change under a constitutional order will constitute not a progressive 'revolution' but a regressive 'counter-revolution' that will annihilate our difficult but considerable democratic progress. Only by ending political confrontation and restarting dialogue can Taiwan enter the next stage of democratic deepening and consolidation."

YOUNG